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" MY MOTHERLAND " SERIES XE. NO. 25.

SUN AND AIR

FOR HEALTH AND CURE

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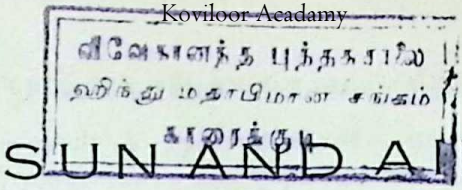

SUN AND AIR

FOR

HEALTH AND CURE

A recent visitor to India, who was shocked by the poverty of the people and the spare food they have to live on, has placed on record that our comparatively good health is due to two causes, sunlight and butter-milk.

Our tropical sun is blamed for a number of sins and discomforts ; and few seem to realise that the advantages are far greater. The almost inexhaustible fertility of our soil is largely due to it : and its share in keeping up our daily health is decisive. The West is slowly recognising its efficacy and thousands of people are to-day spending large sums of money to secure the blessings of sunshine. India has them without the least expense.

A recent investigator in Africa has revealed that the Negros are using the sun very effectively to cure wounds. In case of every injury, they take the first opportunity to hold the affected part in the sun as long as is convenient, and that not only quickens the healing, but prevents complications.

It is also now recognised that sunlight has the power of creating vitamins from foods which are supposed not to contain them and this perhaps explains how we in India get on with foodstuffs that are held to be defective by experts.

Surya Namaskar

That sunlight has a purifying and vitalising effect can be easily demonstrated. One has only to enter a room that has been kept dark for some time to realise how unhealthy and repelling is the environment. When he re-enters an open and well-lighted place, the contrast is immediately felt.

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Our ancestors were fully aware of these properties of sunlight and the daily life that we are ordained to lead is calculated to give us its full value. One of our regular duties is Surya Namaskar, which if done in the proper way, has an excellent health value even as an exercise. The Chief of Aundh who, once a total wreck, has been enabled by Surya Namaskar to build up an enviable constitution, has taken upon himself the task of popularising that ancient practice; and persons who are anxious to build up a healthy and robust constitution have most valuable guidance therein.

Two features of sun-worship deserve to be noted. One is gazing at the sun and the other is praying with open hands. Sun-gazing has valuable reactions on the eye. It is claimed that it cures all complaints of the eye including cataract. Even if that be exaggerated, there can be no doubt about its preventive utility. On a clear day, the eye also benefits by gazing at the cloudless sky away from the sun.

The palm of one's hand has the unique power of absorbing the sun's rays. Hold the palm to the sun for a few minutes, either in the forenoon or afternoon. There is an immediate feeling of warmth; and this practice is specially useful after a cold water bath. The chillness is immediately replaced by warmth.

Cover the Head

Have you noticed the habit of our workmen to tie a cloth round their head when they work in the open? Very often that will be the only cloth on their body apart from the *kaupinam*. And a moral lies behind it. Except when the sun is low, it is useful and necessary to keep off the hot rays from the head, specially from its back.

Another useful habit is that of covering the head with a wet towel as one returns from bathing in a tank or river. That wet towel serves a double purpose. While protecting

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the head from the hot rays, it acts as a tonic to the body. In fact, that is one of the features of sunbath.

Sun Bathing

The simplest of sunbaths, and one most recommended to weak persons or beginners, is basking in the morning and evening sun, very lightly clothed and keeping their face and head in the shade or under cover. They are to expose their palms to the sun and may so keep themselves until they feel quite warm. Then they are to retire completely to the shade, rub the body with a wet cloth and again return to the sun—stopping the process when you feel so inclined.

This bath is best for children and the time for it is before 10 A.M. and after 4 P.M.

A variation in this method of bath is possible in the case of the fairly healthy. When they feel warm, they may cover themselves with a half-wet cloth and continue to be in the sun. In this case too, the face and head must be under cover, and if a shade cannot be arranged, a doubly-folded wet cloth may be put over the same—of course leaving room for unrestricted breathing.

Where this practice is resorted to, *i.e.*, having the sunbath with wet cloth cover, a cooling bath in water adds to the relief.

Dr. Kunhe suggests a further variation of this sun bath. The body is to be covered by a dry cloth and the face and head are to be covered with green leaves or a wet cloth, also, any other parts that may be diseased. The person is to lie in the sun until he perspires, when the sweat is wiped off with a wet cloth or a cooling bath is taken. This practice is however recommended to only robust people.

"Educated" Fools

The commonest of sunbaths is to walk in the warm sunshine, in the fore or afternoon—with, however, two

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precautions. The head is to be covered, preferably with a wet cloth and the rest of the body is to be exposed.

These precautions reveal how foolish most of the "educated" people are when they go for walks.

They cover the rest of the body with a shirt and dhoty, if not a coat as well, and expose only the head—the exact reverse of the practice that considerations of health demand.

These sunbaths are recommended for all people when in health or those of weak constitutions, including women and children. They are also valuable in illnesses, even acute—including pneumonia or typhoid, where however it is best to seek the advice of the physician in attendance. It can however be taken without the least fear of aggravation and are specially useful in chronic cases or in fevers where the temperature of different parts of the body differs.

* * * *

AIR FOR HEALTH

We shall now pass on to the air, on the curative or the health value of which, most people do not bestow adequate attention. It is within common knowledge that while we can remain without food for days and without water for hours, without air, life cannot last for even five minutes. So valuable it is for one's existence ; yet so little attention is paid to it that in at least 90 per cent. of the cases of ill-health, such neglect will be found to be the cause.

When the blood in one's body gets impure and the need for fresh blood is felt—and this is the case every moment in our life—the heart sends the impure blood to the lungs, the cells of which are so thin that the blood is in a position to purify itself by mere contact with the external air. The blood gives up the carbonic-acid gas and takes in oxygen ; and the air needed for this purification and sustenance of the body is supplied by the air we breathe in. As soon as that air takes in the

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impurities, it goes out and fresh air comes in. Without this continuous renewal of fresh air to the blood through the lungs. good health is impossible, and that is why if for any reason even a lung gets spoiled or disabled, the body finds it impossible to keep up its vitality and gives way to the wasting disease.

Two Precautions

For healthy breathing, two points must be prominently noted. One is that as the air taken in, is intended to purify the blood, the larger the contact between the two, the better it is. Therein lies the value of deep breathing. If the air you take in is large, the chest expands, *i.e.*, even for the time being the contact between air and blood is increased. And when deep breathing is regularly practised, the expansion of the chest becomes permanent and the value to health therefore becomes lasting.

Many are the advantages that results from deep breathing, and its efficacy—quite well-known to our ancestors—is now largely recognised even in the West. In fact, several health experts give it the front rank among the rules for longevity.

A Bengal Zamindar has published a book embodying his valuable experience in this field. He says that he was a complete wreck early in life when, fortunately, he came into contact with a Sadhu who taught him the practice of deep breathing. The result was surprising: and the Zamindar lived up to an old age and in grateful recognition of the Sadhu's advice, he printed thousands of booklets embodying his experiences and had them distributed free.

How to Breathe

The first point to be noted in deep breathing is the evacuation of the lungs. The exhaling must be as complete as you can, so that all impure air may go out. When the lung is thus empty, the breath that is taken in is naturally deep and in this way, the process is kept up. Between the

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exhalation and inhalation, it is always best to have a brief rest, which is said to be essential for the organs concerned.

Of course, the breathing has to be through the nose—and that for an excellent reason. The nose is supplied with the apparatus necessary to cleanse the air you take in and it is also warmed in the process. Chills and colds are caught by breathing by the mouth and where the air is not the purest, it is always dangerous to breathe that way. The impurities get into the lungs and damage the same, whereas when the air passes through the nose, the impurities are held up in the passage.

In the light of the foregoing facts, it will be recognised that purity of air is essential for health as purity in the water or the food we take in; and yet how careless we are about it! One's feelings revolt at the idea of the water or food getting mixed up with refuse or excretion; and yet that is exactly what happens, though in an unseen way, when one allows the air to be so contaminated. It is therefore of the utmost importance to keep one's house and surroundings as clean as possible. Else the filth gets into the system through the air that is breathed in.

It is of course impossible in vast cities to secure pure air all through the day. For even when we keep the house clean, the neighbour may not; and municipal authorities rarely do their duty. That is the reason why one must set apart, a part of the day for taking in pure air by morning or evening walks to open spaces. And such walks afford the best opportunity to practise deep breathing. The body must be erect and the chest allowed free scope to take in as much air as possible.

Breathing Exercises

In the absence of such walks, the next best plan is to go into any open space and have a few deep-breathing exercises, some methods of which are given below*:

* *Thyself Thy Doctor*, by the Sadhu Physician of Saraswati Sangam, Price 8 As.

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EXERCISE 1: The body should be least covered and must be exposed to open air. Stand erect with the feet and the heels six inches apart; the mouth is to be shut and the eyes almost closing and gazing at the tip of the nose, both the upper and lower limbs to be kept erect and steady; the neck in a straight line with the back bone and the chest raised from the abdomen, the latter being drawn inwards. The arms are to be slowly brought forwards in from the chest, breathing out very slowly. With the breathing out continued the right arm is to be brought underneath the left arm-pit and left arm overlapping the right arm, the whole chest is to be well squeezed and the breath to be held out as long as possible. Then separate the arm taking breath in till the arms are brought as far behind the chest as possible, at the same time breathing in slowly. When the limbs are sufficiently extended, and the chest is filled with breath, hold the breath in, neither breathing out nor breathing in as long as possible. Now breathe out slowly and bring the arms as before. Repeat the process as often as possible. One regulated process is quite sufficient for a time and the same may be multiplied in course of weeks and months.

EXERCISE 2: Posture as in the above exercise.

Breathe out slowly, bending towards the right side as far as possible, to the extent of the right fore-finger touching the right ankle. Stop breathing while touching the ankle. Slowly raise the right arm and the body, breathing in slowly and fill the chest by the time the body is brought to the erect position. When the chest is full, stop breathing in and out; then slowly breathe out and bend towards the left side and repeat the process as on right side. Repeat the processes on both the sides as often as possible, but not to the extent of exhaustion.

For the third practice, begin with the posture as in Exercise 1. Slowly raise the arms upwards taking the

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breath in. When the arms are raised far above the head and chest is full, stop breathing as long as possible. Then slowly bring the arms forwards and downwards, bending the body and the fingers touching the toes, breathing out during the movement. When the chest is almost emptied and the fingers touch the toes, stop breathing as long as possible; then taking breath in, raise the arms and the body as before. Repeat the process as often as possible.

EXERCISE 4: Sit erect with the head, neck and body in a straight line. Keep the mouth shut and the eyes almost closed and gazing at the tip of the nose. Keep the left foot on the right thigh and cross the right leg against the left leg and keep the right foot on the left thigh. Steady the body. Keep the right thumb on the right nostril and breathe in slowly. Keeping the thumb as before, keep the right fore-finger on the left nostril and thus closing both the nostrils, hold the breath in as long as possible. Remove the thumb and slowly breathe out and when the chest is almost emptied, close both the nostrils as before and hold out breath as long as possible. Open the right nostril and breathe in and close both the nostrils as before and hold the breath. Then open the left nostril and breathe out slowly. Repeat the process as often as possible.

Not more than one of these exercises is to be practised at a time to start with.

Sleep in Open Air

One of the most pernicious of our habits is to sleep within closed or ill-ventilated rooms. The safest practice is to sleep in the open air. The body may be covered; there may be a cap for the head and face; but the nose must be entirely free. Such sleep in open air rarely does any harm: and if there be too much of dew or fear of rain, the open verandah must always be preferred to the room. Even if there be any discomfort, it is only for a few days and there will be no harmful

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consequences of any lasting nature. One danger must however be guarded against. There must be no breathing by the mouth; and those who are accustomed to it should put up a band of cloth for the mouth while going to bed. Within a few days, they will be accustomed to breathe in through the nose and dispense with the mouth gag.

Air Cures

Air has a curative value also, though not so perceptible as water.

The healing effect of deep-breathing has already been referred to. It is only necessary to add here that some obstinate complaints of the nose or nasal cavity, for which allopaths often consider operations essential, are thus healed. To get rid of langour, fatigue or even headache, deep breathing is useful, though many people do not have the patience to go through it to the required extent.

Quite a common form of air-cure is through vapour treatment known as the Turkish Bath, in which hot air leads to profuse perspiration. It is specially effective in gout.

Gandhiji suggests the following further methods of treatment:—

"If a man who is suffering from high fever is stripped naked, and made to sleep in the open air, there is an immediate fall in the temperature, and he feels a distinct relief. And if, when he feels cold, he is wrapped in a blanket, he perspires at once, and the fever ceases. But what we generally do is just the reverse of this. Even if the patient is willing to remain in the open air, we close all the doors and windows of the rooms in which he lies, and cover his whole body (including the head and ears) with blankets, with the result that he is frightened, and is rendered still weaker. If the fever is the outcome of too much heat, the sort of air treatment described above is perfectly harmless, and its effect can be

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instantly felt. Of course, care should be taken that the patient does not begin to shiver in the open air. If he cannot remain naked, he may well be covered with blankets.

"Change of air is an effective remedy for latent fever and other diseases. The common practice of taking a change of air is only an application of the principle of air treatment. We often change our residence in the belief that a house constantly infested by diseases is the resort of evil spirits. This is a mere delusion, for the real "evil spirits" in such cases are the foul air inside the house. A change of residence ensures a change of air and with it the cure of the diseases brought on by it. Indeed, so vital is the relation between health and air that the good or evil effects of even a slight change are instantaneously felt. For a change of air the rich can afford to go to distant places, but even the poor can go from one village to another, or at least from one house to another. Even a change of room in the same house often brings great relief to a sick man. But, of course, care should be taken to see that the change of air is really for the better. Thus, for instance, a disease that has been brought on by damp air cannot be cured by a change to a damper locality. It is because, sufficient attention is not paid to simple precautions like this that a change of air is often so ineffectual."

* * * *

REGULATING AIR FLOW

Health and Power, the well-known journal recently published the following further hints :

FEVER : When you feel any attack of fever or headache, examine carefully in what nostril the breath is flowing at the time, then close that nostril with clear old cotton until cure. In addition you may also lie towards the side in which the air was flowing at the time. By following this direction much of the complications and sufferings that would otherwise

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have been distressing can certainly be escaped even if perfect recovery may not result in a day or two. An otherwise long continued fever would subside within a very short time.

DYSPEPSIA: Let the patient who suffers from dyspepsia, chronic or acute, take all his meals when the right nostril flows. That nostril through which the breath flows more, forcibly than the other is said to be in flow at a certain time. After taking his meal, let him also lie down for some time towards the left side, so that the right nostril may flow for some minutes more. By strictly following the above rules for several weeks one can cure all kinds of dyspepsia, diarrhoea and indigestion.

ASTHMA: Try to transfer the breath when the trouble begins by inhaling through the then flowing nostril and exhaling through the non-flowing or less-flowing nostril. Repeat the process until the trouble ceases and thus the disease also will yield by and by.

Sudden pains, internal or external also can be treated in the same manner or by putting cotton in the nostril.

In fact all diseases are more or less cured by the same principle of changing the breath when there is any attack of diseases, because the ordinary rules which human breath follows when man remains in health of body and mind are altogether changed when some mental or physical evil is to come upon him.

* * * * *

MUSIC FOR HEALTH

(*By Dr. Edward Podolsky in "Health."*)

[*In its physical aspect singing is only a form of deep breathing and as the following note explains it has excellent reaction on health.*—Ed.]

Many measures are now-a-days advocated for regaining and preserving health. The makers of tooth-pastes and tooth

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brushes would have us believe that tooth-cleaning is a paramount means of keeping healthy. The physical culture faddists recommend vigorous exercises, the diet maniacs advise dieting for the same purpose. Even the advertisements in the railway trains have some tip to offer to keep one in trim tonics, pills, glandular extracts, vitamins. The impression they all convey is that health costs money. But this is not so. The natural means of gaining health are the best, and they are the cheapest in every way. One of them is singing.

We are all familiar with the bald-headed barber who offers a bald-headed gentleman a hair-tonic which is supposed to grow new hair. His is decidedly not a very convincing testimonial for a hair-tonic. Yet I do not recall a singer who was not a very convincing voucher that singing keeps one in fine trim. Caruso, I recall, was not a puny, anæmia, weak sort of chap. Neither are McCormark, Scotti and other professional singers. What about the *prima donnas !*

The first observations of the healthful effects of singing were noticed by the French composer and musician A. E. M. Gretry (1741-1813). "I placed," he said, "three fingers of my right hand on the artery of my left arm, or any other artery in my whole body, and sang to myself an air, the tempo of which was in accordance with the action of my pulse; sometime afterward I sang with great ardour an air in a different tempo, when I distinctly felt my pulse quickening or slackening its action to accommodate itself by degrees to the tempo of the new air."

Good Exercise

Modern physiologists have established the fact that singing has a very beneficial action on the circulation. It accelerates the blood-flow, revitalises the tissues, eliminates toxins and other poisonous wastes. It gives one a general feeling of well-being, without having to exert oneself to

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strenuous exercises to obtain the same ends. Exercises are essentially for the purpose of getting the blood to move faster. Very few people seem to care for a daily dozen prescribed set of vigorous motions. Why not then sing a lively tune, a song with lots of pep and go.

And yet that is not all, for singing has also a marked influence on respiration. It undoubtedly strengthens the throat and lungs. By a purely mechanical process, it expands the chest and puts an end to any vicious habit of breathing through the open mouth, instead, of the nose. It is a well-known fact that pulmonary and chest complaints, as well as catarrh are rare among singers. Indeed, I have known some physicians say that singing not only prevents chest complaints, but it may also be used actually as a curative measure against them.

The digestive process also comes in for its share of benefit. In 1881, Dr. Walter H. Walshe of London wrote a treatise, "Dramatic Singing Physiologically Estimated," wherein he asserts that singing is of marked benefit in jaundice, liver complaints and indigestion. It aids in extracting the nutritive elements of food, and facilitates digestion. This is easily explained by the fact that singing involves deep breathing, and deep breathing leads to considerable oxidation of body tissues which occasions hunger and increases the appetite. What more natural way is there? What need is there for tonics and pills when a good song will do?

Teachers of singing, have always noticed that the appetite and digestion of children being trained to sing are always superior to non-singers. The trainers of choir boys, when questioned as to the digestive powers of their young charges always make statements such as these: "Singing always makes boys hungry." "Singing is certainly appetizing." And the late Professor Phillip Arnes, of Durham, said that his boys have the "appetites of horses and the digestion of

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ostriches." We have here a sort of double action, the mechanical exercise of the muscles of the abdomen, throwing back of the head, and deep inspiration, while the increased amount of oxygen absorbed improves the blood.

Several years devoted to a study of the influence of music on the human body have led me to the conviction that this influence is very profound. Not everybody can play an instrument or go to concerts to get the benefits of music, but everybody can sing at least to his own satisfaction. Music is as necessary in our daily scheme of things as is eating and sleeping. A certain period during the day, say, about fifteen minutes, should be set aside for singing. The results will not long be in materializing. The reward will be a general feeling of good health and a supreme satisfaction with life.

THIRD EDITION

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